

Customer and Scheme Participants feedback

Statement

The Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) is committed to maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and integrity in providing a free, fair and independent dispute resolution service for people who are unable to resolve a complaint with their electricity, gas or water supplier.

EWOQ is committed to maintaining an effective complaints management process. EWOQ takes any complaint about our services seriously. Your feedback and complaints provide us with an opportunity to improve the way we provide our services.

This document sets out EWOQ's process for dealing with feedback from our customers and Scheme Participants concerning our conduct and/or service and provides options on what you can do if you are unhappy with how we have undertaken our work or delivered our services to you.

This policy does not cover a review of a decision by the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) in respect of your dispute referral. The [Dispute Referral Internal Review Policy](#) sets out the principles and practices for customers who seek a review of a decision.

This procedure applies to all feedback, as defined, received by EWOQ that concerns our products and

Scope

This procedure applies to all EWOQ Customers and Scheme Participants.

Definitions

Feedback

Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly to or about the organisation, its products, services, staff or its handling of a complaint (AS/NZS 10002:14).

Complaint

Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organization, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required (AS/NZS 10002:14)EWOQ

Complainant

Person, organization or their representative making a complaint about the service provided by EWOQ, or the conduct of any officer. Temporary employee

Complaint Officer

An officer appointed by the EWO to investigate a complaint. The complaint officer is independent from the matter.

Delegated Officer

A person to whom a function or power has been delegated.

Employee

As defined in Section 9 of the [Public Service Act 2008](#).

EWO

Energy and Water Ombudsman appointed pursuant to the *Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland Act 2006*.

EWOQ

Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland established under the *Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland Act 2006*.

Overview

This policy outlines EWOQ's responsibilities when managing feedback from our customers and Scheme Participants. This policy is directly aligned with the *AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations*.

This policy seeks to:

- (a) Provide a complainant with access to an open and responsive complaints process;
- (b) Enhance EWOQ's ability to manage complaints in a consistent, systematic and responsive manner;
- (c) Encourage and support team members to improve their skills in complaint management;
- (d) And reduce the likelihood of complaints developing into ongoing disputes.

Principles

The EWO will ensure that the rights of complainants and EWOQ employees are upheld throughout the complaints management process.

All complainants can expect the following from EWOQ:

- Responsiveness and accountability
- Confidentiality
- Honesty
- Visibility and transparency
- Accessibility
- Ensuring no detriment to complainant
- Objectivity and fairness
- Equity
- Employees who are polite, willing to listen and courteous

EWOQ takes all feedback concerning the provision of service and conduct of employees seriously and;

- Actively encourages feedback about how we carry out our core complaints function
- Takes a customer focused approach to how we deal with complaints about our services
- Accepts complaints about our services either orally or in writing
- Uses complaints about our service to drive improvements to our business processes.

Feedback process

Resolving issues and concerns directly

Informal and early resolution is to be used where possible to resolve a complaint, preferably at the point of first contact and/or within the first 24 hours of the complaint. The most effective and customer focused way to resolve an issue or concern is to discuss the matter with the employee you are dealing with or a Leader/Manager in our office

All EWOQ team members are encouraged to resolve issues when the complaint is received. If you are unhappy with the response from the team member handling your complaint, please ask to speak with their supervisor or manager before taking further action. Information on matters resolved via this process will be recorded by EWOQ to ensure that all feedback is recorded and used to improve our services.

Receiving a complaint

The EWO is responsible for ensuring all complaints received by EWOQ are dealt with appropriately.

Complaints may be lodged verbally, on line via our website or in writing. If you provide your complaint to us verbally, the record will be made by the receiving officer.

Assistance is available to non-English speaking complainants through the Translating and Interpreter Service on 13 14 50. EWOQ prefers that family and friends are not used as interpreters as our interpreter service is free and impartial in all matters.

When a complaint is lodged orally, the receiving officer will:

- Listen carefully to you
- Record your contact information and any issues raised
- Ask what outcome or remedy you seek
- Provide further information about the feedback management process
- Register the complaint and acknowledge receipt promptly
- Advise the EWO immediately.

Anonymous complaints

Complaints can be made anonymously and will be considered in the same way as a complaint lodged by a person whose identity is known, however it is more difficult to investigate an anonymous complaint depending on the details provided. EWOQ will also be unable to advise you of the outcome.

Acknowledging the complaint

All complaints will be registered in the EWOQ Complaints Register within 24 hours of receipt.

All complaints will be acknowledged in writing (using the same medium by which the complaint was made or by a medium requested by the complainant) within 1 business days of the complaint being received by EWOQ.

Complaints about a breach of privacy

In providing its services EWOQ must comply with the privacy principles in the [Information Privacy Act 2009](#). There is the capacity you to make a privacy complaint about the actions of EWOQ. You must first you're your complaint directly to EWOQ and give us the opportunity to respond to the issues raised in the complaint. EWOQ has a **minimum of 45 days** to deal with privacy breach complaints.

Conducting an investigation

Timeframe

The complaint will be investigated by a delegated officer (complaint officer) and should be completed within **10 working days** of its receipt. The investigation timeframe will depend on the complexity and seriousness of the allegation/s; and the availability of parties, documentation and other information. If we are unable finalise by this time we will contact you to provide an update.

Delegating the investigation

The EWO will delegate the matter to a suitably qualified EWOQ employee (complaint officer) to investigate and determine the outcome.

Where a complaint is made against the Energy and Water Ombudsman involving allegations of corrupt conduct, the [Dealing with a complaint of corrupt conduct against the Ombudsman](#) policy must be followed.

Where a complaint is made against the Energy and Water Ombudsman, the Energy and Water Ombudsman in consultation with the Chair of the Advisory Council will decide who will investigate the complaint.

Requesting additional information

Additional information may be requested from you to complete the investigation. The complaint officer may decline to investigate until the additional information is provided. If you decline to provide the information (expressly or by failing to respond to reasonable request) a decision may be made based on available information.

The investigation

Complaints can be investigated in many ways which will depend on the nature of the complaint. Investigating a complaint may include:

- Clarifying details provided in the complaint
- Identifying actions taken to resolve the issue before the complaint was lodged
- Gathering and analyzing information from relevant file notes, correspondence and other sources
- Reviewing documentation submitted by the complainant
- Reviewing previous EWOQ decisions or actions
- Interviewing complainants, employees and/or other individuals involved in the complaint
- Reviewing relevant policies, procedures and/or legislation and
- Reviewing previous complaints about the same issue.

It is important that the extent of the investigation is equal to the seriousness of the allegation.

Outcome of the investigation

Outcomes that may result from the investigation include but are not limited to:

- Taking no further action
- Amending a decision
- Providing a written or oral apology
- An explanation of how and why the problem occurred and
- What actions were taken by EWOQ in response to the complaint.

Request for internal review

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the EWOQ investigation and consideration of your complaint, you may request an internal review of the decision. The request must be in writing unless there is a sound reason for you to make your request orally, for example, age, infirmity or disability.

A review will not be conducted merely because you disagree with a decision. The complainant (you) must provide clear, logical grounds justifying a review.

If the review is justified, the EWO will appoint an internal reviewer to conduct the review of the decision. Team members appointed to conduct an internal review will be from a different business area and of equal or of greater seniority to the original complaints officer.

An internal review involves a review of the process used by the original complaints officer to investigate the complaint and the merits of the decision or action taken. As well as considering the overall fairness of the remedy (to both the complainant and EWOQ), the internal reviewer will examine the standard of performance in the following key areas:

- Accessibility – of the complaint management process
- Timeliness – of response, considering the degree of complexity or seriousness of the issue
- Satisfaction – with the complaint assessment/investigation process and the outcome
- Effectiveness – of the assessment/investigation, response and redress offered and
- Compliance – with the complaint management policy and procedures.

The internal reviewer may:

- Examine all materials in relation to the complaint, assessment and investigation
- Provide information to any final or external reviewer, and
- Collect data about the internal review process for analysis.

A decision will only be reviewed once.

Final review

If after receiving a response to your internal review you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, you may request a final review.

A request for a final review must be in writing and address to and marked:

'Private and Confidential'

Energy and Water Ombudsman

Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland

PO Box 3640

SOUTH BRISBANE BC QLD 4001

or via email to info@ewoq.com.au

The EWO will conduct a final review of the original decision and internal review outcome. The final decision will be in writing within 30 working days.

Recordkeeping

A complete and accurate record of all material relating to a complaint (including actions and decisions made regarding issues resolved at the point of service delivery) is required to be held by EWOQ the *Public Records Act 2002*.

Related resources

Related legislation

- [*Public Service Act 2008*](#)
- [*Public Records Act 2002*](#)
- [*Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*](#)
- [*Right to Information Act 2009*](#)
- [*Information Privacy Act 2009*](#)
- [*Crime and Corruption Act 2001*](#)
- [*Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006*](#)

Useful links

- [Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service](#)
- [Ethics in the Queensland Public Sector](#)

Approval

Approved by the Energy and Water Ombudsman and effective from the date endorsed.


Jane Pires (Feb 20, 2020)

Jane Pires

Energy and Water Ombudsman